

Poker Club

HARRY AMES

A blue haze of smoke hung over the room. Stacks of red, white and blue chips brightened the dull, green top of the table. A cluster of empty bottles in the corner marked the time of night. The salt shaker shaped like a fat, little man sat forgotten next to an ashtray that was heaped with cigarette butts. A neon sign across the street flashed the words—Mandarin Inn.

The shuffling of cards stilled the group. The grating of a finger nail against

the rim of a chip was the only sound. Half-nude girls on the backs of the cards flashed as the dealer skimmed the cards around the table. The terse peck, peck, peck of fingers on the rim of a glass broke the stillness.

"Check."

"Bet ten."

"Call."

"Raise five."

"Fold!"

A Pasture At Twilight

GLORIA NOVAK

This evening, while riding along a quiet country road, I came upon a field in which a group of horses was grazing.

The pastoral serenity of the scene before me filled me with calm peace.

The red glow of the setting sun was just giving way to the long, sleepy shadows of dusk.

A few stray wisps of crimson light played hide-and-seek among a cluster of purple clouds just above the western horizon.

The deep grass played with the shadows cast on it by tall oaks standing guard nearby.

A small flock of white ducks in one corner of the pasture looked as though they had been carved out of white stone.

On one side of the field a long, low building stretched its red painted boards over the brown earth, and a white board fence coiled itself around the building.

In front of the white gate that led to

the pasture was an old buckboard, its battered green body and faded yellow wheels giving silent testimony to years of obedient service.

The evening was quiet—so quiet that the horses lifted their heads from time to time to listen to the stillness; and the clean feeling of the country penetrated the cool, crisp air of early evening.

I watched the sky grow darker blue, and the cluster of purple clouds moved on.

The mist over the meadow rolled and swirled with the cooling gusts of wind and the horses moved, in a group, closer to the red building.

The white ducks broke their rigid, stonelike formation and moved to the fence and under the white boards to shelter.

Silence enveloped the countryside and the twilight tucked its invisible yet almost tangible blanket around me as it put the world to bed for the night.